

THE QUIVER

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(Drawn by C. J. STANILAND.)

"A flock of sheep and two or three goats turned the corner of the road."—p. 99.

THE YOUTH OF MARMONTEL

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

IT was a lovely spring morning, about a hundred years ago, the apple and cherry trees were in full blossom; acacias shook their light clusters of bloom in the soft air, and choirs of sweet birds were heard from every thicket. A young man of slight and rather elegant figure, in a black suit and cocked hat, dusty with travel,

halted on the brow of a little hill which overlooked the country town of Bort.

"Ah," thought he to himself, as he cast himself on the ground and wistfully looked about him, "what memories this spot recalls! Yonder is the cottage, surrounded by beehives and apple-trees, in which my father's simple family were reared on chestnuts and roasted turnips, and clad in the hemp and wool spun by my mother's hands! Poor though we were, yet our rusticity knew a degree of intelligence, and even refinement, and was elevated by the purest affection. My mother, with no other education than she had received from some charitable ladies, had the instinct of good taste, which dictated her simplest expressions; and though my father had much to do to scrape together the four or five pounds which were needed for my education, he took me at the age of eleven to the little college of Mauriac. 'Learning is better than house and land,' said he, 'Get learning, get wisdom and understanding, my boy, and I shall not mind being pinched!' Then, with a kiss and his blessing, he left in my hands my week's provision, consisting of a large loaf of rye bread, a little cheese, a piece of bacon, and two or three pounds of beef. To these my mother had added a dozen of apples. I should not much relish such fare now, but then I dreamed not of discontent!—in fact, I was the best-fed scholar in the school. In that humble seminary I remained six years. The first boy in each class was rewarded with a cross of merit. When my dimity waistcoats were returned to my mother to be washed, she looked eagerly to see whether the silver chain, which suspended the cross, had blackened my button-hole; and, if it had, she called on her female neighbours to rejoice with her; our family returned thanks to Heaven that I was conducting myself so creditably, and my dear Abbé Vaissiere more than any of them.

"Now, I am an abbé myself! Yes, here am I, a young man with a fixed position in society, with nothing to hinder my mounting upward till—ah! who can tell how high I may climb! But, then, I must, to a certain extent, sacrifice my tastes and inclinations. Ah!"

The young abbé seemed disinclined to resolve on any personal sacrifice. Instead of grappling with the difficulties of his situation, whatever they were, he pursued his dreamy retrospections.

"On fine summer evenings," continued he, "the young people used to walk together by the light of the moon. Their usual amusement was singing; and very sweetly did their voices blend together, while the elder people sat at their doors. Young hearts chose and formed ties with one another, which were not disapproved by their parents; there was so little inequality of condition and fortune that parents were almost as soon

agreed as their children. Am I dreaming of Arcadia? No, of my own early days, but a few years ago. Ah! then, Aline, you unconsciously taught me how to love! The simplest greeting from your lips filled me with delight. To me, there was no lovelier face than Aline's; but she was rather older than I was, and far more prudent and unselfish. She would not let me pledge myself to her; 'For,' said she, 'you are too young; you may change your mind. At least, five years must pass before you can settle in life; and you know not for what you are destined.' 'Alas!' said I, 'it is too true; but promise me, at least, that you will never engage yourself to anybody else without consulting my mother, and learning from her whether I have not some good hope to offer you.' 'A hope of what?' said Aline. 'Of a home worthy of you.' 'A very humble one will suffice. Yes, I promise,' said she, sweetly smiling.

"Well, but what has come of all that? Soon afterwards I was placed in a merchant's counting-house at Clermont. The hope of winning Aline should have made me plod on; but the drudgery was distasteful to me, and, after a very short trial of it, I was transferred, at my own request, to the Jesuits' Academy, where, having passed my examinations with credit, I was allowed to act as private tutor to some of the more opulent scholars. At the year's end I returned home, laden with presents for my mother and little sisters; but, to the dismay of Aline, in the habit of an abbé. I had taken no vows, indeed, but my love had cooled. I kept aloof from her, and we hardly exchanged a word. My father's death filled me with painful emotions. I forsook a home that had become too mournful for me, and became tutor to M. de Linars.

"Next time I went home I had to disabuse my mother of a ridiculous report, that I had enlisted into a cavalry regiment, which I attributed to a malicious pretender to Aline. I told Aline so—we had words. She asked why an honourable suitor for her hand should be called a pretender. I was angry. I found I loved her still; but not to the exclusion of my worldly prospects. I returned to the world.

"But my eyes had opened to the wiles of the Jesuits, from whom I shook myself free. I felt a growing disinclination for the clerical profession; but it was time I should make choice of my path in life; whether as a man of letters at Paris, the bar at Toulouse, or a tutor at Limoges. I went to consult my mother—and found her dying.

"Ah, what sorrow! This time I did not see Aline, who was nursing a sick relative, at a distance. On returning to Toulouse, I found that the Controller-General had undertaken to provide for me. The world of fashion and of letters opened before me; and, with six guineas in my pocket, I started for Paris.

"What a dream it all seems—now that I have escaped awhile from the confusion, the intrigue, the dissipation, and excitement of the life I have adopted! How selfish and worthless the men, how hollow the flatteries of the women; and yet I cannot now break from them—their society has become a necessity. Charming as these sweetly pastoral scenes around me are, even Aline could not now make them suffice me; yet I am strongly impelled to see her again. This message of hers has awakened long-dormant feelings, that I thought were dead."

As these thoughts passed through the young man's mind, a little flock of sheep and two or three goats turned the corner of the road, which wound round the hillock on which he was reclining, followed by a couple of women, one of whom bore a long osier wand in lieu of a crook, and the other, who wore a large straw hat, carried a light basket.

"If it had not been for you," the former was saying, "I should have lost my stray lamb, for I am not as young and nimble as I have been, and before I could have got down the bank it would have been swept away by the torrent."

"Pray think nothing of it, mother," answered the girl, in a very sweet voice; "I am only too glad to have been of any assistance. It seems to me there is no pleasure so unalloyed in this life as that of helping others. How cool and pleasant the air is, now that the sun has set! What a calm and gentle stillness!—like the pensive calm that the Christian attains when the sunshine of life is gone."

As she uttered this rather sadly, she drooped her head, and fell a little behind her companion. Though the young man only caught the accents of her voice, it thrilled through him like that of a long-lost friend, and he stepped towards her in doubt and embarrassment.

"Aline!" said he, softly.

The young person started, and looked full at him. The next instant she held out to him both her hands.

"Jean François!" exclaimed she, with joy.

"Aline," said he, reproachfully, taking her hands, but not kissing the cheek that was artlessly offered, "why do I find you thus, engaged like a peasant in following a handful of sheep and goats?"

"The flock is not mine," said Aline. "I did but rescue old Suzette's lamb from the stream, and chat with her while our road lay in the same direction. She is now growing infirm. How often have you and I plaited rushes in the shade, watching my uncle's sheep!"

Jean François did not relish the souvenir. "Those things belong to a time completely past, and therefore better forgotten," said he, with very

questionable politeness. "One cannot be a child always."

"Certainly not," said Aline, rather hurt, as well she might be. Then recovering herself,—"*How singular that we should meet here!*"

"Not at all, granted that you were to be driving the old woman's sheep; for I am on the direct path to the home of my childhood. And not at all surprising I should be on my way thither, considering the message you sent me."

"You received it, then," said Aline, blushing.

"Of course, I did," said Jean François, "you seem to have given Etienne a plain enough direction to me."

"He brought you a basket of last year's apples and a few preserved cherries?"

"Yes; and a message from *you*, Aline, which we may as well discuss now, and here, as at any other time and place. Oblige me by sitting down here a few minutes, Mère Suzette is now out of sight and hearing."

"We have often sat here before," said Aline, placing herself beside him on the mossy bank. Though the sun had just gone down, the sky was still in a glow with amber and roseate clouds, which threw their bright reflection on her modest, pleasant face.

"Ah!" said he, with a little sigh, "that is true. What a simple, happy family we were then, undivided by death! My mother loved you dearly, Aline, and you were very good and attentive to her."

"It was a pleasure to be so," said Aline, with a tear in her eye. "How kind she always was to me! and how proud she was of you!"

"My father, too, good man," said Jean François, with a little self-consequence, "pinched himself to give me a good education, and then to place me in the counting-house at Clermont."

"I have always regretted, Jean François, that you did not remain there."

"Oh! the drudgery was frightful—detestable!"

"You had to sweep out the office, I suppose, and clean your own shoes. Well, there was nothing degrading in that—it was very good discipline. Eventually you would have been——"

"A plodding man of business. It was utterly repugnant to my genius. I was made for better things."

"I know you distinguished yourself very much at the academy," said Aline; "and we all thought your father very good to let you follow your bent, after having been at such fruitless expense to get you established in a different course of life. But oh! how my heart sank when I heard of your being an abbé!"

"You little goose—why?"

"Oh, can you ask?"

"Aline, you are as pretty as ever. Come, don't

look away. You know I took no vows. I might marry this minute, if that were all."

"What is all?"

"Attend to me, Aline," said he. "You see, there are many things to be thought of. My father gave me an education vastly superior to what falls to the lot of most lads of my condition; and why? Because he thought it would lead me to distinction."

"I sometimes think he did unwisely," said Aline.

"Unwisely! why, 'twas the very wisest—most unselfish thing he could do! What can you be thinking of?"

"I doubt if it is altogether good for people to be taken out of their own sphere; whether they are better and happier for it."

"Then you are a little goose. What! were you not all proud, triumphant at each upward step I made? and have you changed your views now I have reached the top of the ladder?"

"But what ladder?"

"Why, the ladder of literary renown."

"Are you at the top of that ladder?"

"Well, it is rather too boastful to say that," rejoined Marmontel, lowering his tone. "At any rate, I am by no means on the lowest round: I have made a very respectable way up it. Nay, why should I mince the matter?—I have obtained such a position as a man of letters and of genius as you good countryfolks cannot form the remotest idea of." And he looked Aline full in the face.

Aline's brown eyes by no means bespoke such overwhelming surprise at the announcement as possibly he expected.

"And does it make you happy?" said she.

"Happy? Yes, of course," said Marmontel. "That is, what do you mean by happy?"

"I thought everybody knew what is meant by it," said Aline, simply. "Happy as you used to be here, when we danced under the poplars."

"Oh, yes, infinitely happier; only in quite a different way."

"I am very glad indeed to hear it," said Aline, with a little sigh, "because now you have set my mind at rest."

"About what, dear girl?"

"Bear with me, Jean François," said she, her eyes filling with tears, "if I cannot explain myself quite as correctly, or in as well-chosen words as you would wish. You remember the occasion on which—we were but girl and boy then—you spoke to me of love——"

"Certainly I do," said Marmontel, with a little constraint.

"I said to you, smiling, 'You well know that if we are to be lovers, we must hope one day to get married, and what chance is there of that?'"

"My dear Aline, those were your very words. You looked perfectly charming when you said so."

"Ah, never mind how I looked. You persisted in your entreaties, and at length said, 'Promise me, at least, that you will never marry without consulting my mother, and asking her whether I have not some hope to offer you.'"

"I did," said he, with some emotion.

"Well, Jean François, I did so."

"What do you mean?"

"Marc Antoine sought to marry me; you know how good he is—there is everything to be said in his favour, nothing to say against him. I was very well inclined towards him; but my heart had been given to you. I went to your mother. I asked her, 'What shall I say to Marc Antoine—yes or no?' She said, 'Well, I do not like to decide against my poor boy. Cannot you wait a little?' So I said, 'No' to Marc Antoine—no, absolutely; and then you were made abbé, and my heart was ready to burst, for I thought that was the first step in a course that must sunder us for ever. But I thought you were determined to be a great light in the church, a man eminently useful in divinity, and I said, 'Shall I give to the Lord only what costs me nothing? no, I will resign to him what is dearest to me without a murmur.' And so I did," pursued Aline, the tears running down her cheeks, "almost without a sigh—constantly remembering you, Jean François, in my prayers. Well, but time went on," continued she, in a calmer voice, "and I found that you did not mean to be a churchman; and you came down here once and again, but never had a word to say to me. I thought, the first time, 'Ah, his father is dying'—and the second, 'Ah, his mother is dying'—and made all sorts of excuses for you, so hard was it for me to believe that you no longer cared for me! And your fame was so dear to me!—But what fame is it now? Not the fame of a great, godly writer, writing great, godly books; but of a *litterateur*; writing little, unprofitable stories,—charades, comedies, and fables——"

"Aline! Aline!" interposed Marmontel.

"And keeping company," persisted Aline, "with actors and actresses, musicians and scene-painters, idle young noblemen and *blasé* men of letters, such as like to hang about theatres, and grand ladies that don't live with their husbands, and grand gentlemen that don't live with their wives."

"Aline, Aline, you are talking of what you know nothing about, and had better not meddle with."

"Well, I am only repeating what Etienne said when he came back from Paris; and he made a world of inquiries."

"Etienne is a prying little jackanapes, and I shall like to dust his jacket for him."

"Is not what he said true, then?"

"True! no—that is, he has made such a hash of truth and falsehood that it is even more mischievous than falsehood itself; because *that* one might disprove."

"Well, I am very glad any of it is false," said Aline, "and so will he be; for he is by no means malicious, as you suppose, and I shall make a point of undeceiving him."

"You had much better do no such thing; and, in fact, I desire you will not. Pray leave me to defend my own reputation. Women have no business to meddle with such things; and as for Etienne's opinion of me, I do not value it at the ninety-ninth part of a straw."

Aline looked at him wonderingly for a minute; for she had never seen him display so much temper. Then she resumed—

"But if any of it is true, it only confirms me in the belief I have been so slow to admit—that time and circumstances have gradually so weaned you from me, that it will be a matter of indifference to you if I now accept the renewed proposals of Marc Antoine."

"Ah, Aline!" and he groaned.

"Why, what have you to say against it?"

"I'm a miserable fellow," said Marmonel, running his fingers through his hair, but without the least thought of tearing it, or of rolling himself on the ground.

"Well," said Aline, after a pause, "you don't seem to have any objection to raise. I kept my promise of consulting your mother, when she was alive: now she is dead, I have consulted you. I would not do anything unfaithful or unkind."

"Are not you as cold as a stone?"

"What would you have? You don't want me to marry Marc Antoine, but you do not want to marry me yourself."

"That is such a coarse way of putting it!"

"Put it your own way, then," said Aline, hurt.

"The only lot I could propose to myself with you would be too full of hazard and uncertainty to make it worth your acceptance. I can, therefore, only envy the man who is enabled to offer you a more secure felicity."

"Certainly no one can call that coarsely put," said Aline, her lip curling a little. "Farewell, then."

"Farewell. May I be permitted?"

"No; no kissing. There is my hand. May God bless you, and make you happy."

"And you."

She walked rapidly away from him without a tear, till the road turned. She felt she had been trifled with, slighted, almost insulted. Marc Antoine's honest heart and homely dignity rose in advantageous contrast with this worldly young abbé, whose course might be prosperous, but certainly was not ennobling, as Aline counted nobility. She thought how different he might have been, how much higher aims he might have proposed to himself; and, perhaps, with his excellent abilities, have won as much of the world's favour after all, without making it his primary object. A tear started into her eye when she thought of his early promise, his father's self-denial, his mother's love. But it would be delusion to fancy him the same Jean François now; his image no longer stood between her heart and good, constant Marc Antoine.

As for Marmonel, he put up for the night at the "Boule d'Or," and supped on fricasseed rabbit and an omelette (his tastes, he said, were always simple); and started for Paris next morning, without a pang of regret for his early love. Which had the best of it? *

A. M.

* Jean François Marmonel was born in 1723, in the little town of Bort, in the Limousin. The outlines of his early life we have given as told by himself. At first it was that of "a simple, industrious scholar, aiming by modest diligence at a humble independence, and only ambitious of distinction for the sake of the gratification it would afford to his parents and benefactors." But the world, which so often tarnishes what it touches, impaired the purity of his morals and the simplicity of his tastes. "From the time of his going to Paris he was plunged into the bustle and intrigues of its literary circles, and into all the glare and dissipation of fashionable society. Instead of rural walks with the young girls of his native village, consultations with his mother, and discussions with curates and school-masters, he had flirtations with actresses, dinners with artists, rehearsals, coteries, jealousies, and perpetual anxieties. It was to the excitements of these turbulent scenes, no doubt, that he owed his success and reputation; but we cannot help fancying that he made a bad exchange for his own comfort and tranquillity; and we think we see in his history a new instance of the wide difference between literary fame and individual happiness."—*Edinburgh Review*, 1806.

SONG.

I.

ABREEZE met my love by the way,
And kissed her beautiful eyes;
But before the close of the day
It had spent its being in sighs.

II.

She trode, in the fields of May,
On a violet of morning sweet,

And it breathed its life away
To follow her beautiful feet.

III.

Am I not fonder than they,
And you ask me why I pine;
Would you have me live for a day,
If I may not call her mine?

A. W. B.

ON THOUGHTLESSNESS.

BY THE REV. G. A. CHADWICK.



E commonly treat want of reflection as an excuse for many faults. Thoughtlessness has now usurped the rightful place of charity, and is allowed to cover a multitude of sins.

A young man may waste his time in idleness, and degrade his faculties by excess, yet kind friends will believe that they have almost vindicated his character, when they remark that he is only "thoughtless." A young woman may betray a passion for admiration and display, and heartless disregard for the feelings of others, and she, too, will be excused as "thoughtless." A Christian may forget the dignity of his calling, and fail to vindicate his Master's name, yet when conscience becomes alarmed, and the light of the soul is seen to be too manifestly burning dim, it is well if he also do not urge the same plea, and avoid a confession of his sin, by a ready admission of his "thoughtlessness."

But the source of so many vices is surely no small evil. That which leads in society to contempt and desertion, ruin, and shame—in religion to guilty compliances and the estrangement of God, seems a dangerous excuse to press; and we learn by a little reflection to understand those passages where it is urged, not as a palliation, but a distinct and glaring offence. In the opening verses of Isaiah, thoughtlessness takes its place among the foremost of those great offences of Israel which heaven and earth are invoked to hear,—it stands between the rebellion of children whom the Lord had nourished and brought up, and the provocation of the Holy One to anger, the revolt which smiting cannot arrest. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, *my people do not consider.*"

The world was thoughtless when God swept away a generation from the earth;—they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away.

In every great convulsion, whenever the scourge of God has fallen upon a state in the exceeding bitter stroke of conquest, revolution, or civil discord, the wonder of after-ages has been the blindness of the victims—"They knew not the time of their visitation." And the final scene of trial and decision will come upon the nations like a thief, it will find the people eating and drinking, and the Church too possibly asleep.

It is thus a serious question, How shall we know whether we meet the just demands of religion

upon our meditation,—how much is required of us by the duty of devout thoughtfulness?

The man who deliberately neglects God's ordinances or his Word, to whom heaven is a strange thought and prayer a rare exercise, knows pretty well that he does not come up to its demands. The formalist, whose prayers are bendings of the knee, and his praises movements of the lips, who receives the communion rather as a charm than as food for the faithful heart—a moment's reflection might well convince him how far short he comes of true thoughtfulness. But even a moment is seldom given. He is too thoughtless to detect his thoughtlessness. He resembles a dreamer, too thoroughly deceived to suspect of falsehood the dazzling images which crowd upon his brain. Infatuated men are like an ox going to the slaughter, or a bird hastening to the snare, and knowing not that it is for his life. The ox knoweth his owner; but they dream of being the friends of God, when Satan has bound them in fetters of brass. The ass—knowing little else—knoweth, at least, his master's crib; but they dream that they are fed with the finest of the wheat, while their souls are perishing for lack of bread. Men should, therefore, apply themselves to find a test, independently of mere opinion and self-indulgent estimates; and this rule, at least, we are safe in laying down—that some proportion should exist in the allotment of our thoughts; that an occasional moment of listless dallying is not enough for the profoundest theme and the most overwhelming interests. So far as earth is outweighed by heaven, and time transcended by eternity, and our hopes of worldly prosperity by the result of the Divine decrees—so far should our temporal anxieties be subordinated to our spiritual concerns. Can we be anxious when the markets are adverse to some enterprise, and yet careless when Divine realities fall dead upon our hearts? Alas, the whole property of the world will have perished in the final flames, when the influence of sacred things begins to be perceived. Shall the day's exertions go for the chaff of time, and for the wheat ten drowsy minutes in the morning, half awake; and at night, ten more drowsy minutes, half asleep? For time, shall we be all on flame, like a soldier in the shock of battle; and for eternity, cold and listless as that same soldier upon drill?

Here an objection is raised. The world would be neglected entirely, and we should think of nothing but devotion, if this rule of proportion

were admitted. The markets would be forsaken for the churches, and the earth would be overrun with weeds, while men were busy about their prayers. Now, if this objection were not urged until the danger showed itself, the answer might be indefinitely postponed.

But, indeed, it gathers all its force from the false assumption that prayer and systematic devotion are the only means of grace. To the Christian, on the contrary, all earth is one great training school, its pleasures call forth his thanks, its crosses educate his patience; the poor recall the Lord who has declared that we may help him in them; its friendships are types and remembrances of that great Friend who is above; wealth teaches to give, like the Father; and poverty to be in want, like the Son; and even bereavement is wholesome in its bitterness, when it frees our affections from the dust. Earth speaks to him of a curse turned into a blessing; of exile from Eden transmuted into education for the skies; of banishment from the face of God converted into the communion of the Spirit, so that for his purged affections nothing is common or unclean, but the bells of the horses have inscribed upon them, as in prophetic vision, "Holiness unto the Lord."

Every one, however, has a special excuse to urge. Each admits the general obligation; but tempers the confession by referring to some peculiar obstacle that besets himself.

1. One is candid enough to own that other concerns drove this out of his mind. Every trifle that presents itself gets share of the attention, and then introduces some other trifle, and God is crowded out, while he, like the guests in the parable, is proving oxen or visiting a piece of land. "I had other things to think of, other expectations filled my hopes." "What things," may not the Judge reply, "to compare with eternity and God? What hope to weigh against the hope of heaven? You chose the unreal and the base, then be content without the substantial and exalted. You consciously built upon the sand, and refused to think of storms and rains, therefore you must not complain that you are homeless now."

2. But a second urges that temporal things are present and tangible; they press upon the senses and solicit the attention; they take men by force, against their will.

And is not God also present? or is it a valid excuse that men have banished him from their attention? One ought to tremble as he confesses that his soul is blind; that the ever-present has drawn a veil over his face, and left the sinner undisturbed among his idols. When faith is demanded, it cannot be sufficient to answer that we do not see. Doubtless, also, there has been some moment when the soul felt Him near, and bowed before its Maker; we bent down, as did Elijah, when

wrapping his face in his mantle, because the Lord went by. Why has the impression faded?

3. "But, after all, it seems very desirable that God would reveal himself more clearly." Yet, if this objection were granted, it would make a poor excuse for carelessness. Surely, if the task of knowing him be difficult, the greater is the need of earnest and thoughtful endeavour. By showing that our minds require to be strained, and our attention strung to the uttermost, one does not prove that he may safely refuse all exertion and effort whatever.

The patriarchs never saw God at any time, but were content to walk by faith. The martyrs who glorified him in the fire were sustained by no help, except what we also may have when we require it. The apostles had the positive drawback of knowing as man Him whom they had to receive as God. Has any man seen God at any time, that I should complain of an obstacle which I share with all the sons of Adam? It is possible, however, that God's seclusion is the greatest help to thoughtfulness. We might see flames of fire, and hear a trumpet waxing greater and greater, but that impression would soon become familiar, and, at the most, sight would only be dazzled by an image of splendour, while conscience is now free to create her own image of holiness and love. God is not revealed to the senses, chiefly because the senses are incapable of comprehending Deity.

4. Another complains that the thought of God is too high and grand, and we feel oppressed as upon mountain tops, where the air is not dense enough to breathe. Yet how dreadful a confession is this! When the heathen did not like to retain God in their thoughts, he gave them over to a reprobate mind. A danger so terrible demands every effort to escape.

Thus each of these excuses has crumbled under a careful examination. Yet God has condescended to provide against them all in the person of Jesus Christ. He mixed with our common world, that what presses so heavily upon our time and attention might suggest instead of banishing thoughts of God. He brought God to our very doors; he revealed him in that visible shape which we have desired, and he made the thought of his Father to be no longer chilling and austere as the hills in winter, bleak in the dazzling whiteness over which the very winds are frozen, but like the same hills in the verdure of spring, winning and soft with the mild virtues of Christ's human life below.

His people do not consider! yet He remembered them when, to remember, was to die. They put him off with such poor excuses as no earthly friend would offer to another; yet if He were to cease for one moment to think of them, their souls would know the bitter pains of eternal death before that moment were expired!

A WORD UPON BEING BOTHERED.

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM, AUTHOR OF "SURE STANDARDS OF THE FAITH."



DO not find *botheration* in Webster's Dictionary; I have not tried, indeed, any other, but it is a striking example of absenteeism, which reminds me of the fact, that the strangest, weird-like words are found haunting dictionary pages, which are never heard in daily life. Thus, for instance, where *botheration* ought to have had a place, I find *bothrodendron*, with the remark appended—"An extinct genus of fossil plants, found in coal formations;" interesting, no doubt, and useful too, but for all that, I cannot help thinking the word might as well be extinct as the specified fossil. Now the word *botheration*, I hesitate not to say, will be upon ten thousand lips to-day, and ten thousand more to-morrow. It will be heard in the kitchen and the parlour, at the tradesman's counter and the clerk's desk, in the cuddy of the ship and the cavern of the coal-pit;—the schoolroom will echo it over decimals, and the Bank parlour over defaulters; it will be whispered by the detective, because the scent is broken, and it will be uttered by the parson, whose line of meditation has been snapped for ever, and unlike the Atlantic cable—(Don't you wish you had some shares in it?)—cannot be picked up again. You do not always want to hear the word: you can see it, everywhere and anywhere—in tone, and looks, and actions! *Botheration*! Why, you have no sooner lost its echo at Chapel Court, where money is so tight, than you hear it from the lips of an old lady, who has been eased of it in an omnibus; and when you have arrived at your dear domestic retreat, and find the god of storms sitting on your chimney-pot, and the smoke (like the old army that marched up, and down the hill again) returning in a rush, then you, too—kind and amiable being as you are—uttered the irrepressible word, "*Botheration*!"

Very well, then all this proves that there must be something in it; and again I find very just fault indeed that it is not in the dictionary.

It won't do to tell me that the word *bother* is there: I know that: as if *botheration* was not all the "ation" worse than *bother*. You know very well how a tail alters anything in nature; why it adds immeasurable force and meaning. You should see my friend's horse in the stable, when the artificial appendage of a tail is removed and hung up till to-morrow! You would not know that horse to be the graceful steed you stroked in Rotten Row; and you can very well understand now why the rider trotted on so quickly the moment you commenced so pleasantly to stroke

the steed near the elastic band which held on the graceful tail.

Now, try the two words: *bother*—spoken quickly: there's not much in it; but *bother-ation*, with a long rest on the *a*, why there's a very wealth of meaning in it. It means missing the train, and no hotel in the village; too late at the bank, and no money in your purse; your trousers torn in twain, and not a tailor in the town. All this is the humoursome side of *botheration*—humoursome, indeed, to those not directly interested. Say what we will, to see a panting traveller miss the express, or to see Major Dobbs crack his smalls, affords to most of the human race a titillation of pleasure. The *botheration* of the individual is, in very many cases, the gratification of the many.

But there is a serious side to the subject, not a whit the less serious because there is a humoursome one to it. I have heard of a good many people who cannot profit by a grace a clergyman said to-day, because he happened in conversation to make a joke yesterday. I need not say that that class of people, all unconsciously to themselves, help to create that artificial, stereotyped, dreary dulness in parsondom, which is so utterly unbearable to all thoughtful and intelligent men. Nature is many sided: she has her moods: she can smile and weep by turns; sometimes in a very close proximity of emotions; and so can we. That must be, at best, but a poor heart which has to preface every free utterance of feeling by saying, in effect, "Although I am a cleric, I sometimes smile, therefore, you will not be surprised if, with the permission of the company, I do so now; excuse the matter, and remember I don't laugh, I only smile." I must confess that some of the most touching thoughts have reached me from men who had a playful side to their nature. Very often in such cases there are deeper shades in the colouring of their character, which thoughtful men, indeed, expect to find, from the very fact that the foreground is so bright. When conversation is left to its free and unfettered flow, then it is delightful to wander through the woodlands with a friend, and let the mind, untrammelled, vent its thoughts, though the merry laugh and the pensive thought succeed one another, each doing its own work, and seeming in no sense varieties extraordinary or unlovely. I make so long a preface to the more serious part of this paper for this reason: after some observation of things, I have found on certain occasions there has been a spoilt evening, which otherwise would have been pleasant enough,



(Drawn by M. E. EDWARDS.)

"O sister! let me share your toil and bread."—p. 107.

from the desire to have only serious talk; and I must confess to having found in such efforts very often an unreal religiousness, and a stereotyped mannerism, which have prohibited the heart from revealing its true self.

Now, you will see that being bothered has occupied my mind in a serious sense. I have thought of the distracted widow trying all she could to make both ends meet, and endeavouring to rise above the frettings of her sorrow. I have remembered the little wife trying to keep the house in order—prepare the meals, keep orderly the children, and chafing her health and spirits out in the heroic endeavour to do the daily duty well. I have thought of the overworked physician, on whom so many lives depend, and of the overwrought statesman, whose brain rests not day nor night. Few, perhaps, know how much need such have of holiday seasons of repose and rest.

There exists a certain class of people, however, who seem to have immunity from being bothered; they push off the bother, or, more truly, put it very constantly on other people's shoulders. I have before me now several shades of character, but all included in one type. Their favourite expression is, "Don't bother!" and they look with supreme contempt on those who do. It sounds all very well to exclaim, at every interruption, "Don't bother!" but *somebody* must. The true meaning is, "Don't bother *me*. Bother my wife, or my clerk, or my neighbour—anybody you like, in fact, but don't bother *me*." That is sheer selfishness, and is as cruel as it is cowardly. Work is comparatively easy; it is the worry that is so hard to bear. I should like to know what kind of homes we should live in—what kind of servants we should have—what kind of creatures our children would grow up into, if nobody bothered. The fact is that *everything in life* is done through little hindrances and difficulties; and that the thing is not done at all, but is marred and muddled at its very commencement, if we are afraid of being bothered.

We all desire education, yet what is more bothering than the multiplication table to a boy, or a music book to a girl? We all compliment orderly homes, but what is more bothering, especially in great cities, than the preservation of clean and comfortable abodes? I fancy you can always tell, by the stale and stifling atmosphere of some houses, that the words, "Don't bother!" are very frequently used. Carpets up, ceilings washed, walls brushed, neatness, elegance, sanitary fragrance—all this means bother! For all this, the bother of doing is not, in the end, one-half so trying as the bother of neglecting. Some people are in a chronic state of bother; they never get out of it. You may always think of them in the sense of

being bothered, without the desired result of being finished with the bother. Those who wish to avoid as much bother as they can, and yet secure the blessedness and beauty of life, should remember the old proverb, "A time for everything, and everything in its place." A lawyer ought to know where to lay his hand on any lease, a surgeon on any instrument, a parson on any sermon—at once; and concerning the work of every week there is one motto which we ought to write over every door of duty. "Be in time! Be in time!"

I have heard the story of the man who was born half an hour too late, and never caught it up all his life; and I am sure that fable has a good moral in it for us all. To *start* is half the battle, whether it be in leaping out of bed, or in putting our hand to the plough of duty. It gives a wonderful easiness to the hardest work of the day, to be in time.

It will not do to cast on Providence our own personal neglect. If we find ourselves overtaken, and troubled at night by reason of the arrears of neglected duty which accumulated yesterday, then we have the ready explanation of the mystery, and need not complain, save of ourselves, as the foolish and negligent beings we evidently are.

Most people will say, however, that they are bothered more about other people than themselves, and more about other people's business than their own. This is true, most true; and a large class of people constantly bother others, whilst they themselves get in and out of difficulties, live well, sleep well, and enjoy life amazingly, at the expense of their friends. They are lazy, careless beings who never get on, and never do anything worth doing, and who are quite content to let some overworked relative take all the anxiety of their lives—pay the bills, and preserve the relics of their reputation. Some of the noblest spirits on earth have been crushed by the bothers of ne'er-do-wells about them. They have themselves died early, whilst the locust race of lazy idlers have fixed on the green fields of their next nearest friend. How often it is said to the discredit of some man that he left his sixty-sixth cousin Tom to want. Perhaps, if we knew all, we should see that the said Tom had worn out as many systems of nerves as there were cousins in the family. What an amazing amount of bother some successful men in this world have to go through; they oftener deserve our sympathies for what they *do*, than our sarcasms for what they *do not do*. Tom has sat upon their brains at bedtime, as well as upon their chairs at dinner.

There can be, I think, no manner of doubt—whatever men's theoretic opinions about Christianity—that its disciples have the best of it in relation to

the trying things of life. We may dispute doctrines, but we cannot deny facts, and these are all in favour of the restfulness and peace of the sincere disciple of the Saviour. He finds, in the simple exercises of faith and prayer, experiences of blest relief from trivial trials as well as from weighty cares. He believes that, reconciled to God by the death of his Son, he can draw nigh to his Father in every place, and that nothing is too insignificant to arrest Divine attention, or receive Divine relief. We want more of the simplicity of prayer, more of child-like trust—more of the deep and quiet sense of the ever-open ear, and the ever-loving heart, and the ever-helping hand of God. We often are disquieted with Lilliputian cares, as well as overborne with Goliath griefs. We have daily ripples on the lake of the heart, as well as mighty surging waves of trial. We are often full of unrest, when we cannot be said to suffer woe. How restfully will our life be ordered if we endeavour to fall in with the Divine ordinances of life, and look up to One who can take the sting out of anxiety, by arranging the issues of all things according to His wise and gracious will! One thing I will say: we ought to help the “bothered” all we can. Where families are rising up, and means are small—though critic after critic may snarl and sneer—

Dorcas societies and such-like companies do good to many aching heads, worn hands, and weary hearts; and it would be well, too, if the lords of the creation were somewhat more mindful of the fact that a little loving help in the sphere of home anxieties would save many lives, who, if true epitaphs ever came into fashion, would have inscribed on their early tombstones, “Bothered to death.” I have specified in this paper certain ways of easing the bothers of life: altogether rid of them we shall never be. We can, however, help to bear each other's burdens. We can each manfully and faithfully battle with the difficulties of the day. Above all, we can seek that grace and help from Christ by which we may be valiant and victorious. But in the world which lies beyond the dim outline of earth's most distant hills—the world of heaven—the Father's house—we shall find eternal rest. There, we read in the inspired Word, shall be no more sea. No waves of agitation or separation break upon the shores of heaven. Nothing evermore shall agitate or disturb. We shall unite in the majesty of restful service and the music of redemption's song with those who rest from their labour. Having come out “of great tribulation,” never again shall we breast its waves, for sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.

REST.



SISTER! I have panted hard for rest,
Through heavy days, through nights of
wakeful care,
And yearned to find that blessing of the blest,
But, ah! I knew not where.

Oft comes a whisper from the early Past,
And coldly taunts me with my vanished dreams;
Each dreary year, more weary than the last,
With hollow glibing teems.

O sister! when we, children, gathered flocks,
And peopled shady nook or sunny spot,
Those were the fleetest, sweetest of life's hours,
Although I knew it not.

Ere we were born, our father died at sea;
Our mother followed him ere twenty years;
And you were left alone with worthless me,
Few hopes, and many fears.

You struggled hard to keep our wonted bread,
Daily uprising with the dawning light,
And working on, with aching eyes and head,
Far, far into the night.

But I repined, and prayed for rest and ease;
And, in dire answer to my selfish prayer,
He came, with lies to flatter, arts to please,
And wiles my heart to snare.

Full merrily rang the bells that morn in May,
When I the bride was of a wealthy man,
My toil and hardship ended. From that day
The whirl of mirth began.

I have the memory of a thousand nights,
Flashing with lustre, echoing with song;
Butterfly flights to wondrous scenes and sights,
But ne'er of rest for long.

Then came the thunderbolt and fiery gloom:
The wealthy man was beggared at a blow!
He spurned me, when I begged to share his doom;
And I—where could I go?

O sister! let me share your toil and bread,
And wait in patience for the long, long rest;
Soon shall I nestle this poor wearied head
In peace on Jesu's breast.

BONAVIA.

DEEPPDALE VICARAGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARK WARREN."

CHAPTER XVII.

"A WONDERFUL WOMAN."



DIONYSIUS CURLING sat immovable in his chair. What was he to do? Certainly, he might have managed the affair with greater tact and dexterity. He might have conciliated Simon Crosskeys, and, by a train of reasoning, convinced him. His science, his philosophy, his various gifts and acquirements, ought to have stood him in some stead: but Dionysius the man was one thing—Dionysius the scholar was another.

There are some minds, highly cultured, who bring into every-day life a clear insight into what should or should not be done; in fact, whose genius and acquirements are welded into wholesome union with common sense. Such was not Dionysius. The time would come, nay, was coming fast, when common sense would work through the crust of pedantry, and he would mellow into a useful and estimable member of society. But at present he was young, far too young.

One thing, however, was clear as daylight: it would be impossible to keep the matter from Mrs. Melrose any longer. In spite of Dr. Plume, in spite of the dangers incident to such a course, he must tell her! What if he were to convey the intelligence in writing? That might do; but then—

Ah! Dionysius Curling, you are thinking of those beautiful eyes, that fair sorrowful face which so haunts you. You would like to witness the effect produced by your words. Something chivalrous, and quite newly implanted in your heart, whispers that, whatever betides, you would be at hand to console and to defend.

The widow had left her chamber, and was now ensconced in the drawing-room.

"She is so eager to get on," said Martha Beck, in explanation of this change of scene.

If he had thought her lovely when attired in a loose morning wrapper, her hair simply gathered into a net, and her appearance presenting somewhat of the dishabille of the sick chamber, she seemed tenfold more attractive now. Her deep mourning dress, with its folds of crape, set off the exceeding whiteness and delicacy of her complexion. Her lovely hair was coiled round her well-shaped head, and all unconscious of the disfigurement of a widow's cap. She came to meet him, holding out her hand. "I am so glad to see you!" said she, with eagerness.

Dionysius blushed as he took the little hand and slightly pressed it. It is astonishing how tiny it was.

"I am all anxiety to hear how my affairs are progressing, Mr. Curling," said she. "I have so far recovered as to be quite able to move."

"Madam, you must not think of it," replied Dionysius, with energy.

She had resumed her place on the sofa. Dionysius, a trifle paler than usual, sat opposite.

"Excuse me," said she, in her dulcet voice, "I have troubled you far too long. I shall never forget your kindness to me, Mr. Curling—never!"

"I am sure," stammered Dionysius, awkwardly, "you are very welcome."

She smiled. His oddity seemed to amuse her. Then she said, "I have written to the landlord of the cottage, and find there is no difficulty in my taking possession of it at once."

He did not speak.

"Pray may I ask if you have seen Mr. Crosskeys?"

Dionysius winced palpably. "I have, madam," replied he, with extraordinary stiffness.

"Well?" said Clara Melrose, interrogatively.

"Madam! I— There has been some little mistake," stammered the unhappy Dionysius.

"Not about the insurance—there cannot be," said the widow, quickly. "It is well known that my dear uncle made that small provision for me. No one in Deepdale would be found to dispute it."

"Exactly so, madam," again stammered Dionysius.

"I am sorry to appear covetous," resumed the widow, sighing, "but in my position I am compelled to look keenly after my resources. Once fairly established, I doubt not that I could maintain myself in tolerable comfort."

"Of course, madam," replied Dionysius, wondering the next minute how he could have said so.

"Perhaps you are not aware that I am somewhat of a scholar," resumed the widow, smiling. Her smile was wonderfully captivating to Dionysius. "My dear uncle drilled me thoroughly in Latin and Greek. He had an idea that women should have a classical education. What do you say, Mr. Curling?"

"I really don't know, madam," returned Dionysius, more and more embarrassed. "Women—ladies, I mean—are rarely able to master the dead languages to any purpose."

"If you will allow me, I will give you a specimen of what I can do," said she, smiling. "I have here a Greek Homer; will you hear me read?"

There was such a charming simplicity in the manner of the request that Dionysius said, with fervour, "Indeed, madam, I shall be delighted."

She took the book in her taper fingers, and a tinge of colour rising to her cheek, partly from excitement, partly from timidity, she began.

Oh! noble language of antiquity! language of heroes! surely you suffered not a whit in flowing from the coral lips of Clara Melrose.

Dionysius was a scholar, remember. This was his own ground. A blunder, even the most trifling, would have been detected. But no. The first men

of Oxford or of Cambridge might have envied the correct and musical cadence of Clara Melrose.

When she had laid down the book, the same tinge of colour beautifying her cheek, her eyes sparkling, and her features glowing with excitement, he exclaimed, with an energy that startled even himself, "On my word, Mrs. Melrose, you are a wonderful woman!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

INNOCENT OR GUILTY?

FOR the moment he had been carried away by his enthusiasm. Not that he was an enthusiastic man—far from it. The musical utterance of Clara Melrose had entrapped him into this unwonted state of mind against his will. He shared the popular prejudice of mankind against that anomalous being called a "blue stocking."

But every rule has its exceptional cases. A fair face, coral lips, and eyes of wondrous brightness and beauty might be allowed to dabble in classic lore with impunity. A middle-aged spinster is the type of womankind supposed to feed upon the dead languages.

He had revelled in that delicious morsel of Greek—fresh, as it were, from immortal Hellas. His correct ear had tested it, syllable by syllable, and found nothing wanting. Each word had rung out clear and musical as a silver bell. Yes, he was fascinated.

She laid the book upon the table, and, glancing shyly up at him, said, with all the simplicity of a girl, "You think it will do, sir?"

Alas, for poor Dionysius! His thoughts, floating away into cloudland, were arrested as by a grip of iron; and a voice seemed to sound in his ear the ominous words, "Simon Crosskeys."

The look of pleasure died out of his face so quickly, and the embarrassment and distress expressed themselves so vividly in its stead, that the widow, little knowing what was in store for her, said, "You need not be afraid of speaking plainly, Mr. Curling. I am, perhaps, out of practice."

"Madam," said Dionysius, eagerly, "you read like a 'first-class.' There is no fault whatever to be found with your Greek."

Her face brightened up.

"Then, sir, as the vicar of the parish, will you kindly use your influence to recommend me?"

"Madam," exclaimed Dionysius, the horror of his position driving him to extremities, "it would be impossible!"

"Impossible?"

The small graceful head drew itself up with a touch of wounded pride; her eager eyes fixed themselves on Dionysius while she repeated, "Impossible?"

"Under the circumstances, it would," replied Dionysius, his face white with alarm and perplexity.

"Under what circumstances, Mr. Curling?"

She spoke in a clear steady voice, not without a touch of authority.

He had taken the Greek volume into his hands,

and was playing with the leaves. His restless, nervous fingers were unable to keep still a moment.

Mrs. Melrose was looking at him quietly and without a trace of confusion. Surprise was the prominent expression visible on her features.

Dionysius was in for it now. To do him justice, his hesitation, at this juncture, partly proceeded from a desire to put his communication into the least painful and offensive form. But as, whatever attainments he might have made in other languages, he was by no means proficient in the use of his own, he broke down at the onset. Some men have a graceful and insinuating address, and can garble any statement, however unpleasant. Not of this stamp was Dionysius Curling. He blundered out, with all the abruptness and stiffness of which he was capable, the words—

"I am very sorry, madam—it grieves me to the heart to say so—but I am informed by some of the most respectable inhabitants of Deepdale, that you have been guilty——"

He paused. Man as he was, he trembled from head to foot.

She had risen, and was gazing at him in blank astonishment.

"Guilty!" said she, quickly, and, as it seemed, sharply—"guilty of what?"

She had come quite close up to him in her eagerness. He shrunk away alarmed—and yet with a feeling of fascination too—and, agitated far more than she was, stammered out the whole story, as he had read it in the pages of the *Deepdale Gazette*—the story of Clara Melrose's guilt.

He did not once glance up, though that he should have done so was the pretext for this interview. She was so near to him that he could distinctly hear the beating of her heart.

There was a profound silence.

All at once she moved to the sofa. Dionysius looked up then. She was pale, and her lips moved, and her brow was knit. She raised herself to her utmost height, as if confronting Dionysius. He might have been the culprit—she the judge.

"Who dares to say it?" asked she, sternly—so sternly, that Dionysius shivered.

Still, here was an opportunity, never, perhaps, to occur again. He would hear from her own lips the words—innocent, or guilty. Still, whether she should tell him or no, he could declare to all the world that she was innocent!

"Mrs. Melrose," said he, "I am a comparative stranger in Deepdale, and therefore unable to judge, from your previous history, whether this strange and improbable story is correct. But your assertion will have sufficient weight with me, for I am not to be moved by popular clamour. Are you innocent, or are you guilty?"

She stood; her figure still drawn up proudly, her head and face in full relief. A sunbeam, straggling down upon her from the half-raised curtain, invested her with a kind of glory, as she said, "I am innocent!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RESOLVE TO "LIVE IT DOWN."

"I KNEW it!" cried Dionysius, with fervour, and as from the bottom of his heart; "I knew it!"

The man—stoic, cynic, whatever you might call him—was actually in tears.

She moved from the sofa. Her face had lost its sternness, and her lips quivered painfully. It must come, and it did—the passionate storm of weeping, the raining of crystal drops from her azure eyes. For she was a woman, caught, as it were, in a snare—a very pit of destruction!

She wept; and Dionysius stood and beheld it. His eye gleamed as, perhaps, it had never gleamed before. His face was flushed—nay, almost eloquent. A mighty change had come over the Vicar of Deepdale.

When the storm of grief was past, Clara Melrose looked up, and pushed back the loosened hair from her damp forehead.

Tears add to the beauty of some women, and they did to hers. Her eyes seemed all the lovelier for those rain-drops hanging from their silken lashes. She had sat down to weep, and had rocked herself to and fro, and made all the pitiful gestures of a woman frantic with despair. But this had passed. She grew calmer—calmer by far than he was.

She held out her hand. It was a spontaneous movement, as if in him she recognised the only friend left to her in the world. He took the hand. It was yet tremulous with emotion. As it lay in his grasp it seemed to quiver. He pressed it gently and respectfully, and, dropping it, retreated a few paces.

Then, she thanked him for his generous sympathy, and convinced him, while he listened, more entranced than ever, that the slander contained in the *Deepdale Gazette* was improbable and impossible. It had either been got up by some malicious and secret enemy, or was the result of a mistake. Under either of these circumstances, her plan would be to live it down—here at Deepdale.

He started. The very idea was alarming. Still, it had a sweetness about it, too. He had been saddened, as he thought that she would fly—miles away—never again to be seen or heard of. He fancied her womanly timidity would cause the natural adoption of such a policy. She would flee, and be seen no more. But to discover that she had the courage to stand her ground, and abide where he could cast his protecting shadow round her—this was very grateful to the feelings of Dionysius. He was not a man of business, and ill-able to advise her in an affair of such intricacy. But it was inexpressibly sweet that, notwithstanding this deficiency, she took him into her entire confidence.

She declared her intention of immediately removing to the cottage. In order to do so, she told him that it was necessary she should be put in possession of the sum of money, which was hers by right. This money—the hundred pounds mentioned above—was most probably lying in the bank

at Mansfield, the nearest market town. As the services of Simon Crosskeys were likely to prove unavailing, she requested Mr. Curling to apply on her behalf to the authorities of the bank; in fact, to procure her the money. The proceeds of the furniture had been, doubtless, sunk to defray the debts contracted by the late vicar after his loss.

And here Clara Melrose wept again, and her tender heart was well-nigh broken at the thought of what the old man had had to suffer. "Would I had never left him!" cried she, clasping her hands and raising her beautiful eyes to heaven. "Alas! had I but foreseen such a catastrophe, no earthly consideration should have tempted me from his side." When this display of feeling was over, Clara Melrose turned to the vicar, and, with one of those smiles which so captivated him, said, "Will you do me this kindness, Mr. Curling?"

"Madam," said Dionysius, his heart bounding with rapture, "I would do anything for you!"

She blushed, and cast down her silken lashes.

"The most beautiful," thought Dionysius, "and the most injured of women!"

The very next morning he rode, post haste, over to Mansfield.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BAILIFFS IN THE HOUSE.

MRS. CHAUNCEY was, as yet, in ignorance of the blow that was so soon to fall upon her. She had risen, and was putting up her work in the basket with its faded lining, when her eye glanced accidentally towards Frank—her eye, which was so quick to discern omens of evil. The poor woman had had an education in them. Frank saw he was observed, and with a quick gesture crushed up the epistle, and flung it into the fire. Not for worlds would he have his mother see it. He could break the news to her gently.

"Frank!" said she hastily, and in evident alarm, "what is it?"

He did not answer all at once. With suppressed emotion he was forcing the letter into the very heart of the flames. His mother repeated the question anxiously, and in a tone of distress. He turned from the fire. The scrap of tinted paper, luxuriously perfumed, was blazing fiercely. Soon not a vestige would remain. He went towards his mother. She was standing with the basket in her hand, but he could perceive that her hand trembled so much that she was scarcely able to hold it. He told her by way of preface that the letter was from his father.

"From your father! and to you, Frank—to you?"

For Reginald the magnificent had never yet put pen to paper to his son.

"Yes, to me. It was to spare your feelings, dearest mother," added Frank, with some hesitation; "he wishes me to break to you the news of—"

He paused. She set down her basket. Her eyes had a terrified expression.

"Has anything happened to him?" she gasped, violently agitated.

"No, no; nothing whatever."

"Thank God for that!" cried she, clasping her hands. "If he is safe, and you are safe, I can bear any other trial."

Frank was silent.

"It was very kind of Reginald," continued she, wiping her eyes, "to wish to spare me."

"To spare her!" thought Frank.

There was no great difficulty in telling her the news. It was an event she had expected to happen for many a day. She only bowed her head in meek submission. Far otherwise had he told her, what he feared was the case, that her husband had deserted her. She was a woman of sterling honesty, and a quick sense of justice. The consciousness of debt had eaten into her soul like a canker. She had, personally, exercised the self-denial of an anchorite; but her efforts had been futile. When she would have built up, another had destroyed; and that other her husband. True, however, to the instincts of her nature, her first thought was of him.

"Where is he, Frank? When will he come home?"

"I do not know, mother."

"Ah, I wish he was here!"

The words were spoken with a wail of yearning affection. Frank, scarce able to control his feelings, walked to the window. A weight like that of an incubus pressed upon his usually happy temperament. He felt as though, indeed, the sins of the father were being visited upon the children. Two sharp knocks at the front door startled him. He turned hastily round to his mother. She had heard them, and, as if apprehending the full misery and disgrace that was about to ensue, had sunk upon her knees in the attitude of prayer.

He left her still kneeling. From his own heart there went up a short petition that God would sustain and comfort her, for he knew that the moment of distress had actually arrived.

Two men were at the door. Only a single glance sufficed to tell Frank who they were, and what was their errand.

They were the bailiffs come to take possession.

"Is the governor at home?" said the elder and more forward of the two.

"No," replied Frank, quietly.

"Are you his son, young gentleman?"

Frank, a kind of shiver running through his frame, replied that he was.

"All right," replied the man, taking a writ from his pocket. "I've got to serve this upon Mr. Reginald Chauncey, Esq. It be a distraint, sir; and we're come to take possession."

It was a bitter moment for Frank. In this world the innocent suffer for the guilty. Frank was innocent. He owed no man anything. He was just, upright, and honourable; and yet, here he was in colloquy with the bailiffs.

The men had stepped into the hall, and were looking about them.

There was not much to look at. Bare walls, once handsomely papered, but from which the paper in some places hung in strips; a stone floor, clean, but bare and comfortless; a worm-eaten table, and a solitary chair. This was the entrance to Reginald Chauncey's home. Poverty had eaten out the heart of all which he once possessed—at least, not poverty, but extravagance.

Frank, stricken dumb with shame and anguish, stood a few moments in silence, until the elder of the men roused him.

"Well, sir, are we a-going to hide here all day?"

Frank started; then, leading them into the kitchen, he said, hurriedly, and in a tone of distress—

"You shall have all you want; but may I beg of you to be considerate to my mother?"

"Is your mother in the house, sir?"

"Yes."

"And not the governor?"

"I told you——" began Frank, but the man stopped him.

"I see—I see! And more's the pity, sir, I say!" interrupted he. "Well, sir, we want nothing in the world—only a bit of baccy and a drop of beer; and you may be sure we won't inconvenience the lady noways."

"Thank you," said Frank, warmly; and, having purchased the good-will of the bailiffs by a trifle of money, he left them.

(To be continued.)

THE THREE SISTERS OF STORMYCLIFF.

A STORY FOR THE YOUNG.



ONCE upon a time, three sisters lived in the sea-side village of Stormycliff. They dwelt in an old square house by itself, and they had no father nor mother, and only an old aunt for their guardian; therefore, though they were quite young, they had much freedom to follow their own pursuits.

The eldest sister, Mara, was pale and dark, and always wore long, sweeping black robes, which she

had never put off since her parents were drowned in sight of the old square house. They were buried in a churchyard among the rocks, and Mara daily visited their grave, and kept it fair with pleasant flowers brought from inland meadows. She also spent much time in weaving wreaths of immortelles. She never went into the fishers' huts, for their joys jarred her, and she thought their cares and troubles coarse and common.

Martha, the youngest, was such a contrast to Mara that it was quite hard to believe they were sisters. She was very fair, with abundant golden locks, and a voice like a silver marriage bell. Martha looked forward to a brilliant city life, for she had a wealthy maiden godmother, whose riches she expected to inherit. Meanwhile she spent a great deal of time in studying dress, and visiting some fashionable friends at a distance, who were able to converse with her about town society. Therefore her walks never led past the churchyard among the rocks, nor yet near the fishers' huts. She often intended to visit both, but they had no interest compared with the bright future which every day brought nearer.

Elizabeth, the second sister, was not so striking and stately as Mara, nor so beautiful as Martha, but she was very pleasant and good, and the sailors called her "The sunlight of Stormycliff." It was she who led out the old aunt on calm sunny days, and in the winter nights, read to her from the Book they both loved. It was she who kept a lamp burning in an upper chamber, as a beacon for those at sea. She loved to be among the fishers, and nurse their sick, and teach their children, and train their girls in godly household ways. Then, too, her way to and fro their houses often took her near the little churchyard, and she liked to go in and rest awhile beside her parents' grave, and try to recall how they would have counselled her. When she had flowers she seldom left them there to wither unseen, but took them to the sick people in the village, as she knew her mother would have wished had she been alive. And this often greatly shocked Mara.

Years, passed on, and the aged aunt went to her rest, and Mara wove her name into fresh wreaths, while Elizabeth, as she read her Bible, pondered over the sweet sayings which the dead woman had strewn along the familiar Scripture paths, and tearlessly recalled her pleasant talk in the places where they had walked and communed together. Martha's godmother, too, was dead, and Martha had got the old wish of her heart and dwelt in the great city, and her sisters heard many rumours of her beauty and gaiety and how she was resolved never to rest until she had a place at court.

More years went by, and Elizabeth saw silver creeping among her brown hair, and found the sun seemed less warm than of old, and the wind more rough, and that folks grew to love her more and more tenderly. Mara did not change much, for she had long since buried all youthfulness. But at last, one cold winter morning, they found her dead in her bed. Though it was very snowy when they carried her to her grave, there were many people at the funeral, who all sympathised with the living sister, but could not grieve for the dead one, because they had not known her.

Elizabeth grew very infirm after her sister's death but Martha did not come to her until she herself grew too feeble to join in any more gaiety. Then she returned to the old square house at Stormycliff, and the two sisters reclined on their couches in the octagon room where they had sported in youth.

"How sweet is rest!" whispered Elizabeth. "God gives us holidays in old age, that our souls may grow calm and strong to do his will when we wake up angels in heaven. Our last duty is patient waiting, and that is so easy when life has worn us out!"

"I do not know that," muttered Martha: "I had almost got to be waiting-woman to the princess, when this illness spoiled all! But it can't last long: I shall soon go back, and severe sickness often brings second youth."

"And how kind people are!" said Elizabeth. "The children bring me flowers, and the girls read to me and tell me their little news; and the servants say so many villagers come to the door with inquiries!"

"I don't find the world very affectionate," snapped Martha; "the girl of whom I made a favourite has taken the very court appointment on which I set my heart. Forward creature! Has she not years enough before her, without pushing her elders off the stage, as if they belonged to a bygone generation?"

Those were Martha's last words: she died before morning, and some people from the court came to her funeral. Elizabeth did not long survive her. On a glorious autumn evening, the grave in the churchyard among the rocks was closed over the last of the three sisters of Stormycliff, whilst the weeping villagers whispered that she who had done her best with the joys and duties of each present day, had surely left the holiest Past and gone to the brightest Future.

I. F.

KEY TO ENIGMA ON PAGE 80.

"All do fade as a leaf."—Isa. lxi. 6.

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|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. A gur | Prov. xxx. 1, 8. |
| 2. L aish's | 2 Sam. iii. 15. |
| 3. L achish | 2 Chron. xxv. 27. |
| 4. D ura | Dan. iii. 1. |
| 5. O phel | Neh. iii. 26. |
| 6. F ortunatus | 1 Cor. xvi. 17. |
| 7. A hikam | Jer. xxvi. 24. |
| 8. D elliah's | Judg. xvi. 4. |
| 9. E lah | 1 Sam. xxi. 9. |
| 10. A holiab | Exod. xxxvi. 23. |
| 11. S heba | 2 Sam. xx. 1. |
| 12. A biha'il's | Esth. ii. 15. |
| 13. L aodicea | Rev. iii. 16. |
| 14. E phron | Gen. xxiii. 16. |
| 15. A hasuerus | Esth. vi. 1. |
| 16. F elix | Acts xxiv. 27. |

SCRIPTURE ACROSTIC.

THE FIRST MARTYR.

1. A scribe in the reign of Hezekiah.
2. A false apostle.
3. One who never saw death.
4. The father of a prophetess.
5. The son of a priest who was slain in battle.
6. The name of an altar erected by Jacob.
7. The first monarch.